

Another issue that I believe is inadequately addressed in the report before us today has to do with the Disabled Veterans Tax, also known as concurrent receipt. This conference report includes a Republican proposal that would only partially end the tax, thereby leaving out two-thirds of military retirees affected by the tax and forcing those covered to wait 10 years for full benefits. Mr. Speaker, since I have been in Congress, I have cosponsored H.R. 303, to provide full concurrent receipt for all veterans eligible for both retirement and disability pay; I have signed the discharge petition to get H.R. 303 on the floor; I have signed numerous letters on this topic; and I strongly support ending this inequitable situation. For that reason, since I support a total fix to this unfair tax, today I will be supporting the Democratic motion to recommit the conference report with instructions to report it back with the complete elimination of the Disabled Veterans Tax.

The conference agreement also contains a number of dangerous provisions relating to the development of a new generation of nuclear weapons. The agreement authorizes the administration's request of \$15 million for research on the nuclear "bunker buster," the Robust Nuclear Earth Penetrator, plus \$6 million for "advanced concept initiatives." I strongly oppose these provisions. Instead of building new nuclear weapons, I believe we should fund weapons that have just as strong a deterrent capability, but do not encourage new uses for nuclear weapons or encourage a new nuclear arms race.

Mr. Speaker, I voted against H.R. 1588 when it first passed the House because of many of the provisions I just discussed. However, even during its first time through the House, I supported the across-the-board 4.15 percent pay increase for military personnel, and I strongly support these provisions again as it is included in the conference agreement.

However, there are a few provisions in particular that I strongly support which were not included in the initial House version of the Defense Authorization legislation. Now that they are included in the conference report, I will be voting in support of this conference agreement today.

One provision not included in the House version, but one that I have been working hard to ensure it is included in the conference report, is authorization of \$9 million for Cannon Air Force Base located in my district in Clovis, New Mexico. \$7.7 million of this \$9 million would be used to construct a much-needed new Aerospace Ground Equipment (AGE) Complex and \$1.3 million would be used to install a permanent Simplified Short Approach Lighting System (SSALS) with sequenced flashers on a runway at the air force base. These are both very important upgrades that will improve the safety of our troops stationed at Cannon Air Force Base and, in turn, help improve the safety of our nation.

One other provision that has helped sway me to support passage of this authorization is making an additional 12,000 legal permanent reservists who serve in the military eligible to apply to become U.S. citizens after a year of service for citizenship in the United States. I believe that if immigrants are willing to serve in war, then a grateful nation should give them what they are fighting for, American citizenship.

Mr. Speaker, clearly there provisions that are both good and bad. In a bill this size, it is

inevitable that this is the case. As such, because I believe the conference agreement includes important provisions that were not included in the House version of the bill, I will be voting in support of passage of this important legislation. With our men and women overseas in harms way, supporting this bill with its important pay raises for them and their families is a fitting way to show our support for them.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. EARL BLUMENAUER

OF OREGON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, November 18, 2003

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, had I been present for the following votes on November 17, 2003, I would have voted as follows:

Rollcall vote 620; I would have voted "yea" on S.J. Res. 22, recognizing the Agricultural Research Service of the Department of Agriculture for 50 years of service to the Nation.

Rollcall vote 621; I would have voted "yea" on S.J. Res. 18, commending the Inspectors General for their efforts to prevent and detect waste, fraud, abuse, and mismanagement, and to promote economy, efficiency, and effectiveness in the Federal Government during the past 25 years.

Rollcall vote 622; I would have voted "yea" on H. Con. Res. 299, honoring Mr. Sargent Shriver for his dedication and service to the United States of America.

Rollcall vote 623; I would have voted "yea" on the motion to change the hour of meeting.

AMERICA'S PRIVATE SECTOR AIDS CIVIC EDUCATION EFFORT, VOTER PARTICIPATION

HON. ROBERT E. ANDREWS

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, November 18, 2003

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Speaker, a recent Gallup poll that asked Americans what keeps our country strong found some very interesting results. While 67 percent identified "willingness to serve in the military" as important to keeping America strong, 84 percent and 86 percent, respectively, identified "high level of voting (in national elections)" and "having a well-educated populace". Yet other polls show that our citizens' civic knowledge is low and that our voter participation is among the lowest in the world.

A number of Americans, from my district and from virtually every other district across the country, are undertaking a major effort to keep our country strong, according to the definition expressed in the Gallup poll. They are working to keep Americans well educated about civic matters and to encourage citizen participation in our democracy.

These patriotic Americans have joined with the Committee for Citizen Awareness (CCA) and other notable Americans like Secretary of State Colin Powell, and Constitutional author Caroline Kennedy in this effort. The CCA provides free, award-winning civic videotapes to America's high schools, cable television sta-

tions, community colleges, libraries and others in every congressional district in the country.

We all owe a debt of gratitude to the efforts of the CCA and to individuals and organizations such as the following:

Tom Beddow, Vice President of Public Affairs and Government Markets of 3M Company

Donald J. Gillespie, President and CEO of A.M. Community Credit Union

John Schofield, Chairman, President and CEO of Advanced Fibre Communications

James W. Barner, President and CEO of Altoona Hospital

Barney B. Chapman, Vice President of America First Credit Union

Marite Plume, President and CEO of Argonne Credit Union

Dr. G. William Benz, President of Ashland University

Ricky A. Burke, Vice President of Metro Region Operations of Atmos Energy

LuAnn C. Williams, Corporate Communication Officer of Bangor Hydro-Electric Company

Dr. Michael Allkins, President of Bay De Noc Community College

Dr. Robert Fisher, President of Belmont University

Michael Cascone, Jr., Chairman, President, and CEO of Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Florida

Gary A. Regoli, President/CEO of Boeing Wichita Credit Union

Truman L. Gates, Chief Executive Officer of Desert Regional Medical Center

David Jacobstein, President and COO of Developers Diversified Realty Corp.

Andrew "Flip" Flipowski, President and CEO of divine interVentures, inc.

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Robert Anestis, Chairman, President and CEO of Florida East Coast Industries, Inc.

Patrick L. Taylor, CEO of General Electric Evendale Employees Federal Credit Union

Dr. Craig Turner, President of Hardin-Simmons University

Dr. Charles D. Dunn, President of Henderson State University

Ray Romero, Chairman of Hickam Federal Credit Union

Dr. Jean Goodnow, President of Illinois Valley Community College

Andrew L. Farkas, Chairman and CEO of Insignia Financial Group

Dr. Jerry W. Weber, President of Kankakee Community College

Dr. Joseph G. Burke, President of Keuka College

Dr. Linda Stegall, President of Kingwood College

Thomas Fleming, Chairman of the Board of Kirkbride Center

Walter Malinowski, President of Labat-Anderson Inc.

Dr. L. Michael Metke, President of Lake Washington Technical College

Hank Hernandez, CEO of Las Palmas Medical Center

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Mark Hillard, CEO of Maricopa Integrated Health System

Sister Mary Reap, IHM, President of Marywood University

Kenneth Rudzewick, President and CEO of Maspeth Federal Savings and Loan Association